

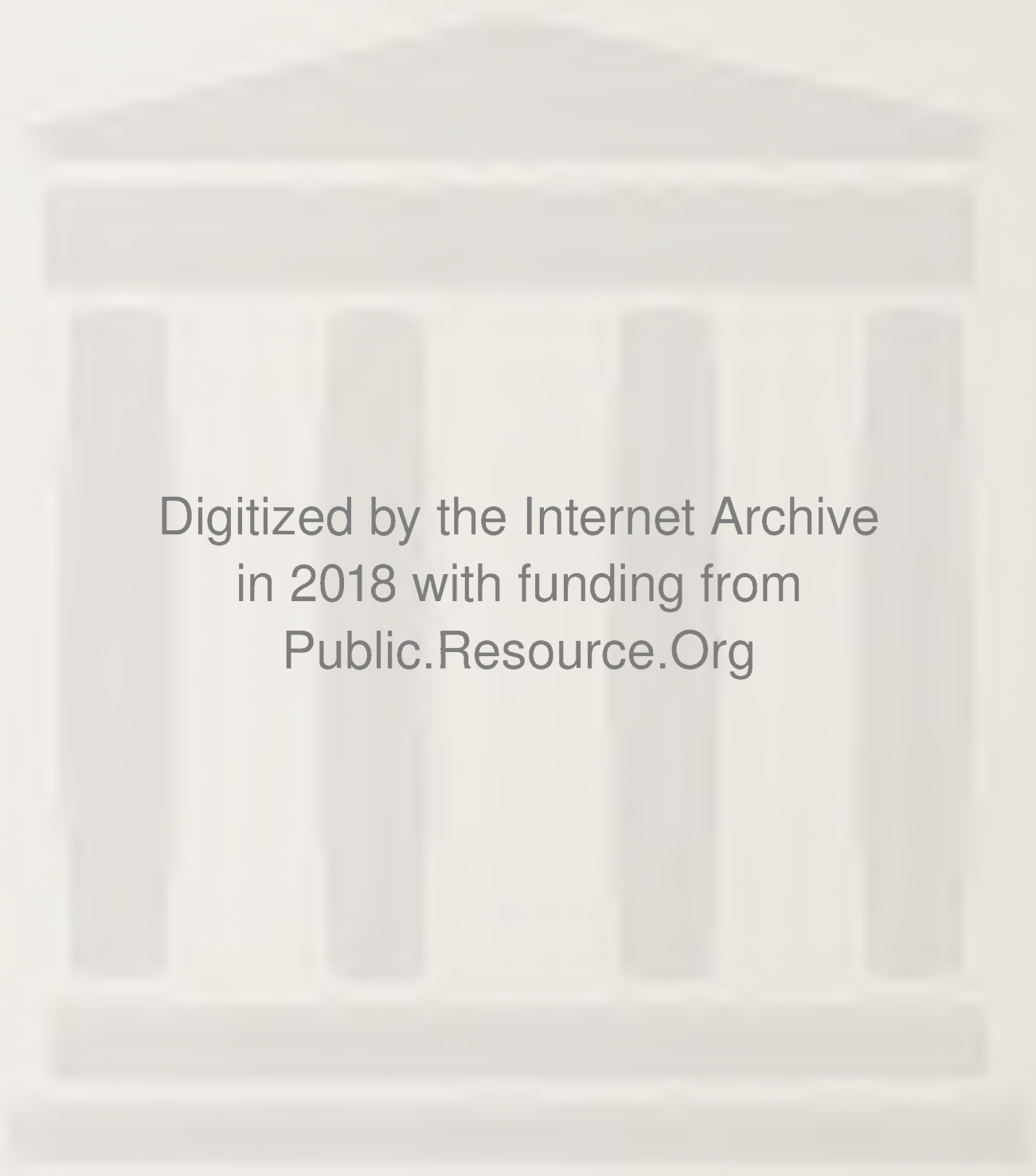
OLD SINGHALESE
NURSERY RHYMES
AND FOLK SONGS



COLLATED AND ILLUSTRATED BY
HEATHER HAMER



OLD SINHALESE
NURSERY RHYMES
AND FOLK SONGS



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
Public.Resource.Org

<https://archive.org/details/oldsinhalesenurs00heat>



The newly brought bride washed the seven kinds of rice.

**OLD SINHALESE
NURSERY RHYMES
AND FOLK SONGS**

COLLATED AND ILLUSTRATED BY
HEATHER HAMER

WITH A FOREWORD BY
SIR SOLOMON DIAS BANDARANAIKE



ASIAN EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
NEW DELHI ★ MADRAS ★ 1999

ASIAN EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

* 31, HAUZ KHAS VILLAGE, NEW DELHI - 110016
PH. : 6560187, 6568594 FAX : 011-6852805, 6855499
E-mail : asianeds@nda.vsnl.net.in

* 5, SRIPURAM FIRST STREET, MADRAS - 600 014,
PH. : 8265040 FAX : 8211291
E-mail : asianeds@md3.vsnl.net.in



(Special Price for Sri Lanka only)

First Published: Colombo, 1935
AES Reprint : New Delhi, 1999.
ISBN : 81-206-1374-0

Published by J. Jetley
for ASIAN EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
31, Hauz Khas Village, New Delhi - 110 016.
Processed by AES Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi-110 016
Printed at Choudhary Offset Process, Delhi-110 051.

OLD SINHALESE
NURSERY RHYMES
AND FOLK SONGS

Collated and illustrated by
HEATHER HAMER

With a Foreword by
SIR SOLOMON DIAS BANDARANAIKE, K.C.M.G.

CEYLON: THE COLOMBO APOTHECARIES CO., LTD.
PUBLISHERS, PRINCE STREET, FORT, COLOMBO.

MCMXXXV

FOREWORD

In terms of pure decorative art Heather Hamer is spiritually in the direct line of descent from Aubrey Beardsley, and the application of her gift to Sinhalese subjects is a happy piece of good fortune for us. We have had much to complain of at the hands of travelling painters who spend a short time here and perpetrate on canvas types that are not merely crude, but savour of caricature. Mrs. Hamer knows her Ceylon, as she lives in it, and an artist of her distinction will not risk her reputation in eccentric experiments. Eminent critics have spoken in very high praise of her work, and nobody who has seen could have failed to be charmed by the delicate grace of her pen. After a recent exhibition of her work, the South Australian Art Gallery purchased a work of hers for its permanent collection.

To the discovery and study of these Nursery Rhymes a great deal of time and patience must have been devoted, and the illustrations typical of her genius for decorative art, would of themselves alone be an acquisition to be treasured.

The public are already aware of her beautiful depiction of scenes from the Mahavansa. They cannot, but continue to be fascinated by this new and handsome offering. Of Mrs. Hamer it may with perfect truthfulness be said that she has touched nothing that she has not decorated. Through her eyes life itself is an exquisite decoration.

S. D. BANDARANAIKE.

Horagolla,
Veyangoda.

PREFACE

These Nursery Rhymes having been handed down from generation to generation, contain many old Sinhalese words, some of them being no longer in use. I found the greater number of the Rhymes in an old volume of "The Taprobanian" (1887) in an article written by the late Sir Hugh Nevill, C.C.S., F.Z.S. Sir Hugh vouches for the fact that they are all "of ancient and traditional circulation among Sinhalese villagers, all widely known . . ."

Others of the Rhymes have been collected locally; for which, with their translation, I am greatly indebted to the kindness of Mr. P. G. D. S. Senawiratne and Mr. D. C. Ranasinha. Their help has been invaluable.

HEATHER HAMER.

Kadugannawa.



Moon Uncle, bring a golden plate

OLD SINHALESE NURSERY RHYMES AND FOLK SONGS

1

Moon Uncle, bring a golden plate, that we too may eat rice.

2

Aturu Muturu ! All throughout Asia !

The Settiya of the King's Court !

Ho you, I went up a Wara tree,

Ho you, I culled the rukkalatiya,

The newly brought bride

Washed the seven kinds of rice,

Mashed a basin of egg-fruits,

Distributed to the upper house

Distributed to the lower house,

But to me gave not even a pinch.

The little pot which was in the well

Bring to the surface, oh Settiya.



Wave, wave, sea-brought watery wave
Might, might, Rasinha Deva's might.

3

Flower, flower, like a golden coconut's flower,
Wave, wave, sea-brought watery wave,
Might, might, Rasinha Deva's might,
Fort built of rock, Tiri kona male.

4

Little brother and I went into the ulkaenda wood,
Little brother got hidden in the same ulkaenda wood
Are not all four guardian gods amidst that wood ?
Come out to go to the house my little brother.

5

Little brother, little brother, pluck those Na blooms and come,
The branch will break ! Placing your foot lightly come,
Come and see the water going down the Mahawili Ganga,
Giving shouts of Sadhu ! come rowing in the boat.



Sasanda, Sasanda! Below the water are the yams

6

Sassandra, sassanda ! Below the water are the yams,
Sassandra, sassanda ! On the surface of the water are the
leaves,
Bedewed with rain the budding flowers ripen,
On the surface the lotus bloom is like a pearl umbrella.

7

We have played the pearl game by the resting shed,
We have played with water at the old well,
The flowers of the water-lily are nodding in the breeze,
And yonder I see our mother coming.

8

Our mother gave birth to us seven,
Taking a string she tied the door fast,
Saying I will bring sugar oh children,
Mother went out deserting her children.



The Bodhisat is going across the waste

9

When the sun shines will the sun not reach its zenith ?
When the moon shines will the moon not reach its zenith ?
Will muddy water not mix with clear water ?
Shall we who are motherless not be hungry ?

10

Eating on the hill the Bodhisat is going across the waste
Tying bells on his hands, tying bells on his feet, he has gained
the victory,
With royal prosperity he has gotten good favour,
To the Walawe river descend elephants with mottled skins.

11

Hen bird, hen bird, your child, my child under a rock,
Under a root are hidden, to search out those shine forth a
sunbeam, hu !



“Hen bird, hen bird, your child, my child...”

12

It is good for the hen bird to perch on this broom,
It is good for the cock bird to perch on this broom,
It is good for the hen bird to eat from this grain ear,
It is good for the cock bird to eat from this grain ear

13(a)

Run to the hills, bring an iguana, give to mother too, give
to father too, give to big brother too, give to big sister too,
give to little brother too, give to little sister too, eat thou too,
give me too. Tickle, tickle, tickle.

13(b)

Run to the hills, bring palm-sugar, thou too eat, give to me
too. Tickle, tickle, tickle.



...Pina bringing a load of pots

14

At the resting shed, Pina
Bringing a load of pots,
Bumped against me. Bullock
What are you laughing at ?

15

Rain is raining
The mud is becoming sticky,
The bullock is running,
The bag is getting wet.

16

On that side the river I went with the crowd
Travellers on the road mocked at me !
In shame that I did cultivation work,
The spotted iguana struck me with his tail.



Grandfather, shall I pluck a coconut?

17

Oh god ! the wrong that has come to me,
Thieves went off taking the mat at the watch hut,
When a mat is lost great is the "hubbub,"
The one who gave me the mat is my own relation.

18

Grandfather, grandfather, shall I pluck a coconut ?
Don't, I shall be angry.
I have twisted the stalk round,
Why then pluck it, don-don.

19

As Nondi Pancha was going on a journey
With Siman Pancha he met,
For two "coppers" drinking toddy
Both tippling quarrelled.



Hallo Kalu, what is it, Kalu?

20

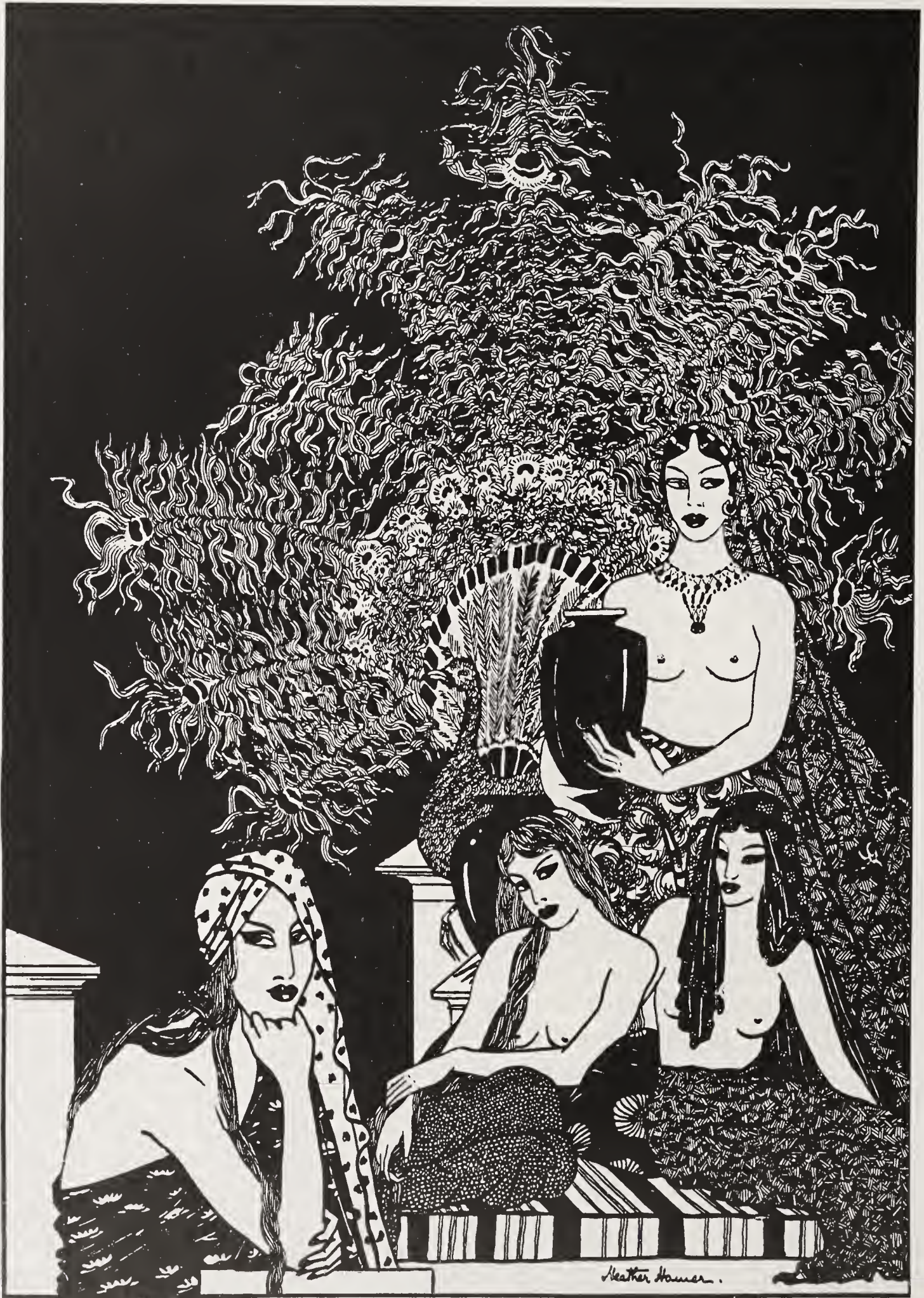
Hallo Kalu, what is it, Kalu?
Kohila shoots are tasty to eat,
The miyana shoots in the basket
The child threw away, Kalu.

21

Dew is settling on the moisture of the rice fields
On the roof the straw is nodding nodding in the wind
Bumble bees are taking pollen from the shapely flowers.
Our mother is coming from afar drench, drenching.

22

Brought from the lake, flowers,
Are these lily flowers,
Plucked from the ponds, flowers,
Are these fine lotus flowers,
Blooming on trees, flowers,
Are Idda and Areca flowers,
Drawn from a creeper, flowers,
Are the fragrant jessmine flowers,
Blooming in rivers, flowers,
Are Kekatiya and Olu flowers,
Called " kehem " flowers,
Are the plantain flowers.



Heather Houser.

We have played the pearl game at the resting shed

23

Ploughing Song

A-ploughing a-ploughing I must go
With ropes and goads for bulls,
There's the field and here's the plough,
Open the sluices to drain the field
Yoke bulls to plough to better the yield,
Ho, buffalo, oho, oho !

24

Sowing Paddy

The seed paddy has sprouted
I have got to sow it,
I will take it and sow,
Enough has been sowed that side
But this side requires more,
I will take it and sow.



Oh sister, songs and verses are sweet and suit a time like this

25

Reaping Paddy

With the sickle that is in my hand the golden ears of paddy
are reaped,

Plenty of rice we can eat when paddy in our home is heaped,

Thus I reap, bending, bending.

My little hands now give the smell of the ears of paddy,

Oh sister songs and verses are sweet and suit a time like this,

Thus I reap bending, bending.

See how my hand is roughened by the handle of the sickle,

True it gives me pleasure when the coarse bar rubs against me,

Thus I reap bending, bending.

26

The jak branch at the washer's house

Bore one fruit.

To eat this there is no salt.



Sleep, sleep, baby

27

Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, baby,
Soft, soft, soft, softly, baby,
Handsome and playful baby,
May you live long, baby.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, baby
Soft, soft, soft, softly, baby
Beloved my own baby
May you live long baby.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, baby
Soft, soft, soft, softly, baby
Little tender-fleshed baby
May you live long baby.
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, baby,
Soft, soft, soft, softly, baby
My own golden baby
May you live long baby.

28

Oh crows, caw, caw, caw,
Oh crows, give, give, give,
Arecanuts from the tree of the compound, arecanuts,
Which you refused to give me for a chew, arecanuts,
I shall make a complaint to the Gamarala,
If you do I will seal your lips.
Thief of a cat, mew, mew,
Bag of goraka crash, crash.



Travellers on the road mocked at me

29

A crow sitting on a coconut branch loud crying, loud crying.

A jackal sitting on a slab rock, loud crying, loud crying.

A warty dog below in the field, running, running.

30

In Tayya's clearing Buyya feeds

In Buyya's clearing Tayya feeds.

O-hu!

31

Caw, caw, crow, caw,

The gamboge tree ding, ding, ding,

The tree at the door bom-bom

In the cock crow's mouth is a jak fruit pulp,

In the hen crow's mouth is a golden coin,

To eat on the road is a bag of rice

From the bund of the dam be off, be off,

From the screen door be off, crow, be off.

32

The bull was tied on the other side bank to a na tree post,
The bull was tied on this side bank to a sapu post,
The bull jumped into the water rushing down both banks,
Alas for gold pearl my tuft-tailed bull.

33

She ate a little curd crying mew, mew,
Thus bathing her paws and legs in saliva,
She made her tail dance,
Purring all the while
She fed her kittens.
When she sees her children play
She crouches and pretends she is going to pounce on them.
The root of cat's joy makes her intoxicated,
Spittle pours out of her mouth
While she claps her paws with pleasure.

NOTES

No. 1.—The first eleven of these rhymes are mythical or imaginative. “Moon Uncle,” is the nursery name for the moon, and the moon is his golden plate ; cf., our “Man in the Moon.”

No. 2.—“Aturu Muturu” is most likely the name of some obsolete god. Wara tree is an herbaceous plant, so climbing would be impossible. Sir Hugh Nevill suggests “ruk-kalatiya” is derived from ruk=a tree, kalatiya=little hard unripe fruits ; cf., our “gathering oak-apples.”

No. 3.—Is an illusion to the capture of the Portuguese Fort at Trincomalie by Rajasinha’s army.

No. 6.—May be an invocation to the moon (*Sasanda*, hare-moon ; or *sassana*, eternal). In the Culawansa (LXXVI. 81,) it says, “From what foe among the brutes is the hare in peril who has fled to the moon ?” alluding to the Hindu idea that there is a hare in the moon (like our “man in the moon”) therefore the moon is called in Pali *sasin*, from *Sasa*, hare. Ma-nel or great lotus is sacred to the moon, and its flowers are often compared to the royal umbrella, one of the insignia of Eastern Royalty.

No. 10.—The river may be here personified as the Bodhisat. Mottled elephants are considered by the Sinhalese to be beautiful. Thus the metaphor may be read . . . the river is fed from the hills and crosses the plains on its way to the sea, as the Bodhisat passes to the ocean of Nirvana. Bells tied on his hands and feet like the bright ripples of the river at the source and mouth (there is a play on words here in the Sinhalese). The Walawe river flows out between Tangalle and Hambantotte, and its banks used to be favourite haunts of elephants ; cf., our “To see a fine lady ride on a white horse,” etc.

No. 13.—These two variations touch on jungle life in the hills, where the villagers hunted small game and made palm sugar.

No. 14.—Clumsy Pina is called “bullock” as we should call such an one, “donkey.”

No. 20.—Kohila shoots are the young leaves of an arum, and miyana shoots are the young fronds of a fern, both are eaten as a vegetable.

No. 30.—To scare birds off paddy-fields, and perhaps a satirical allusion to the petty thefts that sometimes occur; cf., our “I went to Paddy’s house,” etc.

